

5. Sealing activities

5.1 SEALING PROCEDURES AND EQUIPMENT

To facilitate the identification of sealing locations on the New Zealand coast it is pertinent to consider the types of activities that these are likely to represent, the equipment required, and their potential for leaving physical remains in the archaeological record. As an industrial process three general types of activity can be envisaged: **extraction** of the resource, **processing** of it, and the **logistical support** required for its participants.

5.1.1 Extraction

As the foregoing review indicates, sealing on the New Zealand mainland was directed almost exclusively to the recovery of skins, and the vast majority of these were from fur seals. Extractive activities must have been confined to locations frequented by fur seals. Although occasional fur seals can be found ashore almost anywhere throughout their range, they occur in numbers only at regularly occupied colonies. All of the information that can be gleaned from archaeological and historical sources (Smith 1985, 1989), post-exploitation studies of fur seal distribution (Wilson 1974) and recent analyses of re-colonisation (Bradshaw 1999) show that these are found only on exposed rocky coasts, frequently with steep cliffs backing the colony.

Historical descriptions of sealing operations show that colonies were usually approached from the sea in whaleboats. Frequently only some of a sealing gang could be landed as two or three would be required to hold the boat offshore (e.g. Heaphy 1863; Starke 1986: 53).

Minimal equipment was required: a seal hook, of iron with a wooden handle about 18 inches long, was used to hold the seals; a club, of hardwood and usually about 3 feet in length (Fig. 8), was used to despatch or stun them via a blow to the snout; sometimes a lance was used to kill the animals; and a knife and sharpening stone or steel was required for skinning them. When sealers entered sea caves to take their prey, burning torches were used for light. There are occasional reports of sealers shooting the animals, all after the 1820s, but this risked damaging the pelt, and appears to have become a common method only in the 20th century. Except in the small number of operations where fur seal oil was

Figure 8. A sealing club from Martins Bay, Westland. It is made of wood with an iron bolt inserted in the striking end and two holes drilled through the handle for attaching a wrist strap.

Photo courtesy of Southland Museum and Art Gallery



being recovered, the carcasses were abandoned once they had been skinned and the vast majority were presumably swept away by the next high sea. For these reasons it is unlikely that any direct archaeological evidence will have survived from the extractive component of the fur sealing industry.

Fur seals can be taken at any time of year. They are on shore in greatest number during the breeding season (December-February) and are least abundant after the weaning of pups in July or August (Crawley 1990: 253). It has frequently been stated that there were two main extractive seasons, on the basis of the evidence of John McDonald, a sealer with seven or eight years experience on the New Zealand coast, who told Commissioner Bigge in 1821 that:

‘the best season for taking seals for the China market is when the pups are six months old. This is in April. The other season is about Christmas, when the females come to the males’ (McDonald n.d.: 4570).

However, analysis of the times of year encompassed by all the voyages to the New Zealand mainland from 1803 to 1823 and the times of year that sealing gangs were ashore in the same period (Fig. 9), shows that most sealing was concentrated in the summer months. Fewer sealing vessels were present in

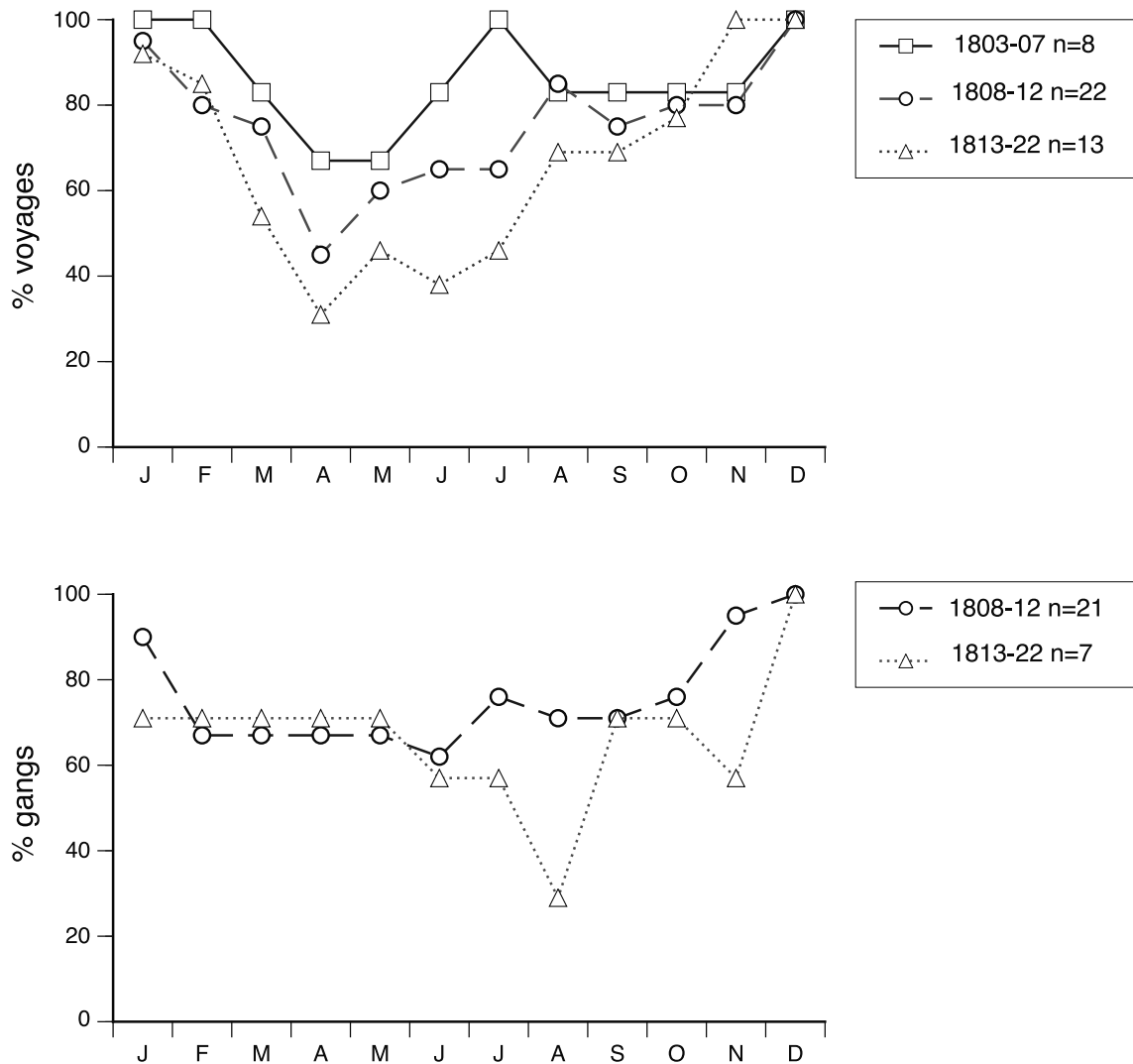


Figure 9. Seasonal presence of sealing vessels (above), and sealing gangs (below) on the New Zealand coast, 1803-22.

April than at any other time, and there was no increase in the presence of sealing gangs at this time of year. This was the case not only in the period when McDonald was active in the industry, but also in the earlier years when greater numbers of skins were being taken for the China market. Other evidence to the Bigge Commission makes it clear that the China trade still persisted in 1821, but was 'much diminished' (Riley n.d.: 3871–3872). It seems likely that McDonald's reference to an April season reflects a specialised aspect of sealing incorporated into some of the exceptionally long voyages undertaken by his master, John Grono, throughout the difficult years of the industry, rather than the typical extractive pattern.

5.1.2 Processing

McDonald described two methods for preparing skins.

'Those intended for the China market are dried on shore by laying them out with pegs ... The skins intended for the English market are cured with salt' (McDonald n.d.: 4571).

According to Heaphy (1863) the latter, after salting, were 'folded into a close, flat parcel, with the hair outward', then packed into a cask. Most of the skins taken in New Zealand were destined for London, because of the better prices they returned and probably also the greater suitability of the required processing method to New Zealand conditions. Nonetheless, references to dried skins occur occasionally throughout the sealing period.

Neither processing method would be expected to leave any direct archaeological remains. However the drying of skins on the shore implies a need for space, and perhaps also shelter. On the Patagonian coast it was reported that in good weather a skin could dry sufficiently in a day, but frequently required several weeks of constant turning (Busch 1985: 12). This is also likely to have been a problem in New Zealand, and it is interesting to note that the *Britannia* sealing gang, preparing skins solely for China, had a 'drying house' at their Luncheon Cove base (McNab 1907: 334).

McDonald also indicates that oil was obtained from New Zealand fur seals.

'A pup will give about two gallons more or less. A wig, that is an old male, will yield five or six gallons' (McDonald n.d.: 4571).

This does not appear to have been a common practice. There is only one sealing voyage for which it is reasonably certain that seal oil was recovered on the New Zealand coast, and interestingly it is an 1816–17 voyage by Grono's *Governor Bligh* on which McDonald was almost certainly present. As already noted (section 3.4), both the quantity and quality of data on oil returns is less adequate than that for skins, and the possibility that vessels returning from Macquarie Island with cargoes described simply as 'oil' might have collected seal oil from New Zealand cannot be ignored. Nonetheless, it seems most likely that McDonald's evidence again describes one of Grono's specialised activities rather than the typical pattern.

There was also some later recovery of seal oil, as it was reported in Hobart in 1828 that 40 gallons had been landed from New Zealand (Carrick 1903: 117), although which voyages these arrived on is not specified. At the time this was seen as a new development in the industry. A London trade circular of

November 1830 commented on ‘the folly of our sealers hitherto, in not availing themselves of so important and profitable an article’ (Carrick n.d.). The following year a Tasmanian sealer complained that seal oil ‘has been so long overlooked by our merchants’ before going on to describe the method by which it was procured.

‘The process of obtaining the oil is a very simple one. The casks should have two bottoms; the upper one a few inches above the other, and perforated in several places to allow the oil to pass through. Having removed the skins (which of course can be kept and rendered available as usual), put the flesh in the cask, placing a very light pressure on the top, and an oil of a beautiful white lucid colour is soon deposited. This, of course, is termed the cold-drawn oil, which is drawn off, and a heavier pressure placed on top, by means of which a second quality, somewhat thicker, and of browner hue, is obtained; still, however, superior to the black oil. The refuse may then be boiled down, and will afford a third quality’ (*Sydney Gazette* April 5 1831).

If only the cold-pressing method was employed, little would be expected to remain archaeologically. However any rendering by boiling, presumably in a trypot, would produce charcoal and ash residues, and perhaps also oil- or fat-derived deposits such as have been found at some whaling station try-works (Campbell 1994).

In the final stage of the industry New Zealand became the base for the recovery of elephant seal oil from Macquarie Island. It has not yet been clearly established whether the Dunedin merchants Cormack, Elder and Co, who operated this trade from 1878 to 1884, were simply re-exporting the oil or involved in processing it. However in 1888 Joseph Hatch began the production of ‘Elephant Brand Lubricating Engine Oil’ at his Invercargill factory.

5.1.3 Logistical support

The sealers engaged in extracting and processing skins and oil required transport, shelter, provisions, and equipment. The sealing vessels that provided transport to and from New Zealand ranged in size from 18 to 370 tons (mean 120 tons), but most voyages were undertaken by vessels of less than 100 tons (Fig. 10). These were preferred as their ‘shallow draft—eight or nine feet—and their hardiness in all winds and weather made them best for work close in shore’ (Jones 1986: 258–259). Only two are recorded as having been wrecked on the New Zealand shore—*Hunter*, on Kapiti Island prior to passing through Cook Strait in 1829 (Ross n.d.: 64), and *Industry* at Easy Harbour on Stewart Island in 1831 (Ross n.d.: 68)—although at least three others which disappeared without trace, and unrecorded sealing vessels, could also have entered New Zealand’s marine archaeological record.

The ships involved in the New Zealand sealing trade visited not only sealing locations, but also various ports and harbours to ‘wood and water’, undertake repairs, trade for provisions such as pork and potatoes, and at times to provide rest and recreation for their crews. Thus not every location mentioned in accounts of these voyages is a place at which sealing took place.

As already noted, access to the seal colonies themselves was generally by whaleboat. Although these came in a range of sizes they were typically open, double-ended, clinker-built craft of about 25–30 feet length, powered by four or



Figure 10. Size of sealing vessels on the New Zealand coast, 1791-1890.

sometimes six oars, and they usually carried a sprit or lugsail (Bathgate 1969: 361-362; Starke 1986: 49). Boulton's records indicate that in the right conditions distances of 50 miles could easily be covered in a day (e.g. Starke 1986: 36, 48), which would have permitted exploitation of seal colonies at some distance from ship or shore bases. Boats were at times left on the New Zealand shore with the intention of re-using them (McNab 1907: 84, 153), so clearly remnants such as metal fasteners or fittings could have entered the archaeological record.

The *Britannia* gang were accommodated at Luncheon Cove in 'a dwelling house 40 feet long, 18 broad and 15 high' (Raven n.d.) and covered in thatch (Murray n.d.). As noted above, they also had a drying house. These are the only known primary descriptions of the size and form of built accommodation for New Zealand sealer's and may not necessarily be typical. Huts were constructed by shore-based gangs from the *General Gates* at 'South Cape' (McNab 1907: 182) and Lee Bay, Chalky Inlet (Begg & Begg 1973: 119). They were also used by boat-based gangs. Boulton refers to sealer's huts at Arnotts River, Open Bay Island, Milford Sound, George Sound, Anchor Island, and Codfish Island (Starke 1986: 36, 40, 41, 48, 49, 52, 94). Huts can perhaps also be inferred at Jackson's Bay and Doubtful Sound (Starke 1986: 38, 51), but nowhere does he describe their size or form, although he frequently commented on the roaring fires. He also refers to the use of caves for accommodation at Arnotts Point, Cape Providence, and South Port (Starke 1986: 41, 54). It seems likely that one or other of these forms of accommodation were generally employed, although both Boulton and Palmer also indicate that temporary shelter was sometimes found under an upturned whaleboat (Starke 1986: 64; Hocken n.d.).

With the low potential for survival of evidence from the extractive and processing aspects of the industry, the accommodation places are the most

likely to have left an archaeological trace. As well as foundations of buildings, fireplaces, and within-cave structures, there is the potential for finding garden soils. Boulton notes that at least one of the huts had a garden established, with 'a few celery plants, cabbages, potatoes, and turnips' (Starke 1986: 40).

It is also pertinent to consider what kinds of faunal and artefactual material might be expected at such sites. The *Britannia* sealing gang was left with 'provisions and stores for twelve months' (Raven n.d.), although what they consisted of is not made clear. Typical rations are reported for other early gangs. A weekly per-person allowance of 'seven pounds of meat, ten of flour or biscuit, and one pound of sugar, together with ten bags of rice for the voyage, and tea or grain for coffee' was provided for men in a gang bound for the Antipodes in 1804 (Hainsworth 1972: 143). Men going to Macquarie Island in 1810 were allowed 7 lbs of salted pork, 8 lbs of bread or flour and 1 lb of sugar (Cumpston 1968: 22). Boulton mentions salted pork, flour, sugar and tea, and also the need to forage for indigenous resources including birds (with the aid of a dog), fish, crayfish, shellfish, and fernroot (Starke 1986: 37, 38, 48, 49, 52, 91, 93). Of the imported items, only bones from the salted pork could be expected to survive archaeologically, along with hoop iron from the casks in which provisions were usually transported and stored. The indigenous resources would contribute bones and shells, but on their own these would be difficult to distinguish from the middens of Maori settlements.

Salt, presumably also in casks, would have been an essential requirement on all except the earliest voyages. Other equipment was generally minimal. The *Active* gang were left on Open Bay Island in 1810 with an axe, an adze, and a cooper's drawing knife (Begg & Begg 1979: 143). Items mentioned by John Boulton include muskets, a keg of powder and 200 or 300 balls, a water bucket, grindstone, cooking pan and large iron pot, blankets, and clothes (Starke 1986: 36, 41, 48). Other artefacts that may be expected in archaeological deposits include clay tobacco pipes, glass bottles, and utilitarian ceramic vessels.

5.2 SEALING STRATEGIES

Four different strategies by which the various sealing activities described above were pursued can be identified from the historical record.

5.2.1 Shore-based sealing gangs

The type of activity most often described in previous accounts of the sealing industry (e.g. McNab 1907: 148-198), involved gangs of men deposited by a ship at a specific location on the New Zealand shore to harvest and prepare seal skins before being collected again. The tribulations of some gangs that were inadequately provisioned, abandoned for long periods or murdered on New Zealand shores attracted considerable contemporary newspaper comment and sometimes stimulated legal proceedings in Sydney courts, leading to a much richer historical record than other types of sealing activity. However the data under analysis here shows that this was not the only strategy employed, and suggests that it may not have been the most common.

Only 18.2% of the sealing voyages to the New Zealand mainland up to 1840 were definitely involved in either depositing a sealing gang on shore then departing for other activities, or returning to provision, replace or uplift the gang and collect the cargo that it had accumulated. Another 10% have possible evidence of such activity (Fig. 11). Clearly some of the voyages for which there is little surviving data were probably also servicing shore-based gangs, but for

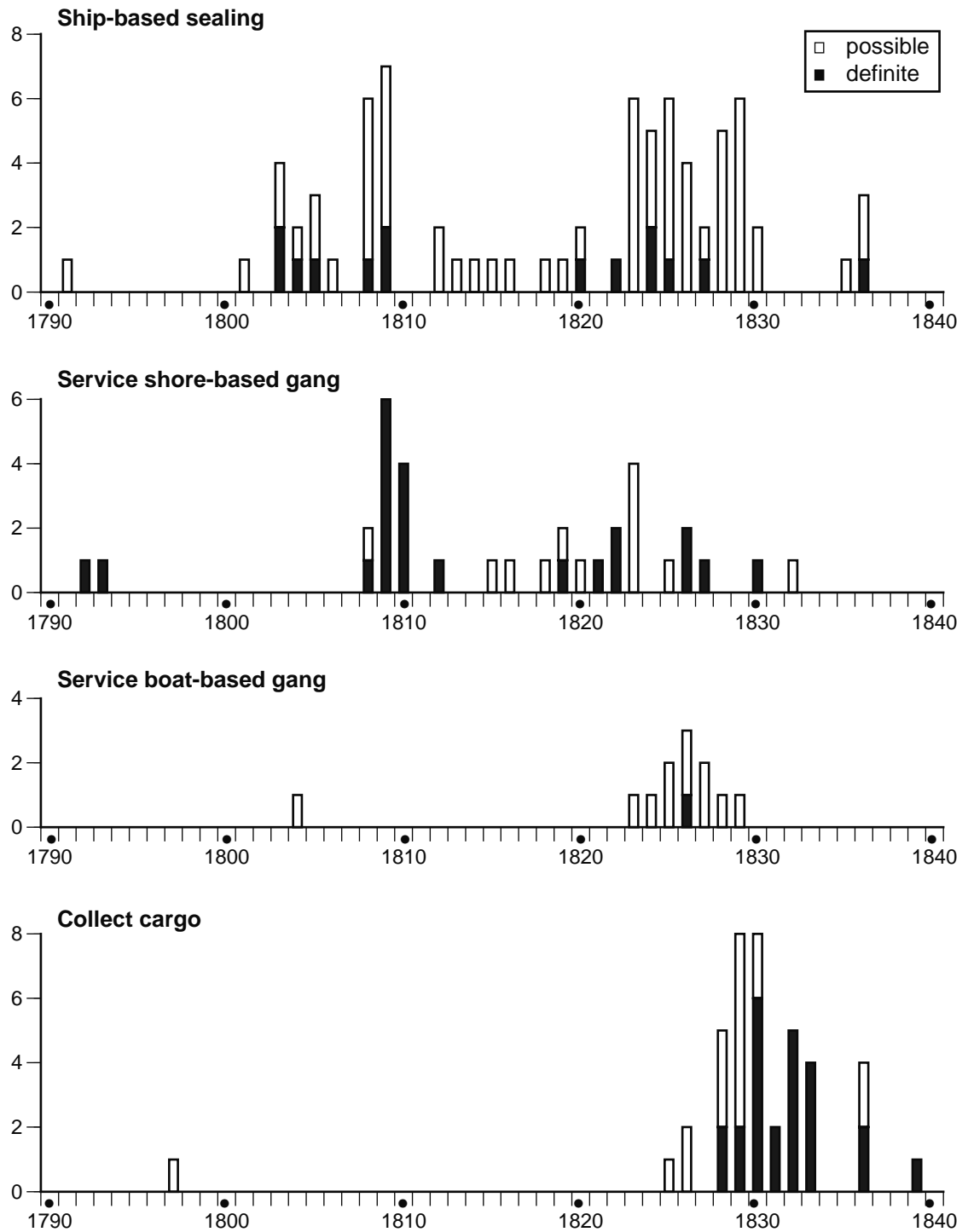


Figure 11. Sealing strategies inferred for voyages to the New Zealand mainland, 1791-1840. Note that some voyages are counted as possible candidates for more than one strategy, and that for 20% of voyages no strategy has been inferred because of insufficient data.

most of the remainder there are indications that other strategies were being employed. There are also several references to activities of gangs that cannot be related to specific voyages (e.g. Allan 1965: 13, Richards n.d.), and therefore cannot be included within the quantified data here. One further example is known from the 1946 open season.

These data provide varying quantities of evidence on the activities of some 26 shore-based sealing gangs (Appendix 2). The earliest of these was the *Britannia* gang of 1792–93, but fully half of the recorded examples were set down in the 17 months between September 1808 and January 1810 during the initial rush to Foveaux Strait and Stewart Island. Another cluster were deposited in 1821–22 at the beginning of the revival in the New Zealand trade. It can be suggested from this that shore-based sealing was most effective as an exploitation strategy when seal numbers were greatest or had had some opportunity to recover, but was less effective when seal numbers were low.

Most of the ‘possible’ examples derive from the period 1813–22, for which there is little precise data about modes of operation. The large numbers of skins returned from some of the voyages in this period are suggestive of a shore-based strategy, but at the same time the long duration of these voyages makes ship-based sealing (see section 5.2.2, next) an equally likely alternative.

Shore-based sealing gangs were typically made up of between 6 and 12 men, and stationed for periods of about 6, 12, or 18 months, although in two cases abandoned gangs were on shore for about four years. The relative permanence of the base camps from which these gangs operated give them perhaps the greatest potential of any sealing sites for survival of evidence in the archaeological record. In addition, the rather better historical data available for them enhances their prospects of being located.

5.2.2 Ship-based sealing gangs

This strategy involved using the ship bringing sealers to the coast as a mobile base from which to exploit seal colonies. This was described, in a general way, by de Blossville in 1823.

‘When a ship is fitted out for an expedition of this kind, it is provisioned for the whole duration of the campaign... Having arrived on a shore which appears promising, they embark in boats, and leaving the ship sometimes for several days, they explore the smallest bays and storm beaten rocks, knowing that where the sea is the most stormy, there will the animals, which they pursue, be the most numerous. The least useful men are left on the ship as a guard. The vessel remains in a safe haven and receives any necessary repairs...’ (McNab 1907: 220).

Early whaling ships conjectured to have undertaken sealing on the New Zealand coast would almost certainly have operated in this way. The first detailed description of a voyage which fits this mode is that of the *Endeavour*, the first vessel to work the New Zealand coast in 1803 (McNab 1907: 80–81). Only a small number of other voyages provide similarly clear information. However reasonable inferences can usually be drawn from data such as length of voyage, places visited, and numbers of men aboard on departure and return, to suggest that this strategy was probably employed by 12% of voyages up to 1840, and possibly by another 51% (Fig. 11).

If these inferences are correct, then this was the most commonly employed strategy for sealing in New Zealand, and was in use throughout all stages of the industry, at least up to 1840. In particular it seems to have operated to the exclusion of other strategies between 1803 and 1807, when the mobility that it afforded would have aided the discovery of new seal colonies on previously unexplored shores. This ability to move gangs to where the seals currently were to be found would also have been an important strategic consideration after the major colonies had been depleted. It certainly appears to have been the predominant method used in the 1946 open season.

The major significance of this strategy for the present study is that it would have concentrated most of the domestic activities of sealers on ship rather than on shore, and in this way dramatically reduced any evidence in the archaeological record.

5.2.3 Boat-based sealing gangs

A third approach to sealing is described in Boulton's account of his first eight months in New Zealand (Starke 1986: 35–56). This involved setting down one or more gangs with their boats on a stretch of coast along which they would work, staying in huts, caves or simply camping on the shore, collecting provisions from supply depots and rejoining their vessel at an arranged rendezvous point.

While only one example of this is explicitly recorded in the historical literature, there is good reason to believe that this type of sealing played an important role in the mid to late 1820s. The earliest example may be O.F. Smith's exploration of the eastern shore of Stewart Island and eastern entrance to Foveaux Strait in 1804, although how much sealing was actually accomplished at this time is open to conjecture. Most of this activity, however, seems to have taken place in the 1820s (Fig. 11).

It is clear from Boulton's description that boat-based sealing was not new in 1826. The network of huts and supply depots was already established, and the locations of suitable caves were well known. Molloy (1987: 5, n.d.: 9) suggests that this pattern had emerged by the early 1820s, and it is proposed here that this strategy came to predominance about 1823. It has already been argued that mobility was an important strategic consideration after the initial depletion of seal numbers at major colonies. It has also been shown that the period after 1823 saw a significant shift towards mixed trade, seal skins being just one amongst a number of products in the cargoes of most ships. The boat-based strategy provided a way of integrating these two imperatives, allowing the sealers to cover a wide territory while the ship went elsewhere to secure flax, pork or other desired goods. However, the logistics of working by boat—carrying necessary provisions and storing and transporting all recovered skins on a small whaleboat—would be a viable strategy only when relatively low numbers of skins were ever likely to be recovered. Large quantities of skins simply could not be accumulated by this strategy and, as already noted, there was a marked reduction in the numbers of skins returned per voyage after 1823.

5.2.4 Resident sealers

As early as 1805 sealers and sailors occasionally deserted from their gangs or ships to live permanently on the New Zealand shore (Richards 1995: 22-25; Entwistle 1998: 43-49). Until the mid 1820's, most appear to have lived within Maori communities and there is little evidence that they continued to play an active part in the sealing trade. However about 1825 a larger group of deserters (perhaps from several ships and gangs) established a permanent settlement on Codfish Island (Howard 1940: 62-67; Entwistle 1998: 62-63, 173), from which they continued sealing. Boulton joined a boat crew from Codfish Island sealing around Stewart Island and Foveaux Strait in the summer of 1827-28. His descriptions of their activities (Starke 1986: 91-106) show that they operated much in the same way as a boat-based gang, except that they were much more dependent upon local resources. The only imported provisions to which they had access were small quantities, acquired from ships, in exchange for seal skins. Exactly how many ships acquired skins from the Codfish sealers is not known, but the shipping data do indicate that, from at least 1828, vessels calling at southern New Zealand for other cargoes (principally flax, pork, timber and whale oil) were also collecting small parcels of seal skins (see Fig. 11). Although its inhabitants increasingly became involved in other activities, the Codfish Island settlement can legitimately be considered a sealing site. Its main components are likely to have been huts and other features of domestic activity.

At least three other resident communities established about this time engaged in sealing as an adjunct to their primary activities. The whalers operating from George Bunn's shore whaling station in Preservation Inlet (1829-36) went sealing in their off-season, probably mostly on the Fiordland and Foveaux Straits coasts, but on at least one occasion as far away as the Auckland Islands (Ross n.d.: 66). The ships servicing this station regularly included seal skins in their cargoes. Inhabitants of William Stewart's ship building settlement in Port Pegasus probably engaged in occasional sealing throughout its occupation (1826-33), although confirmation of this comes only from the first year of its operation. Whalers from Te Awaiti, in the Marlborough Sounds, are reported to have made more or less annual sealing trips to the West Coast from about 1836 to at least 1845 (Richards n.d.). Another community that might have done a little part-time sealing is that established by James Spencer at Bluff in 1824, although there is no clear evidence of this activity. In contrast to the Codfish Island settlement, none of these could be considered primarily a 'sealing site'.

From about the middle of the 19th century Riverton was the main port out of which sealing was undertaken, along with Bluff, Invercargill, and Dunedin. However the only component of any of these settlements that can be explicitly associated with the sealing industry is Joseph Hatch's oil processing factory in Invercargill.

6. Sealing locations

Of the 154 sealing voyages that definitely or probably visited the New Zealand mainland and offshore islands up to 1890, 99 (64%) provide at least some evidence of the locations at which they operated. At a regional level these show a strong concentration on the southern and south-western coasts (Table 4). Of the

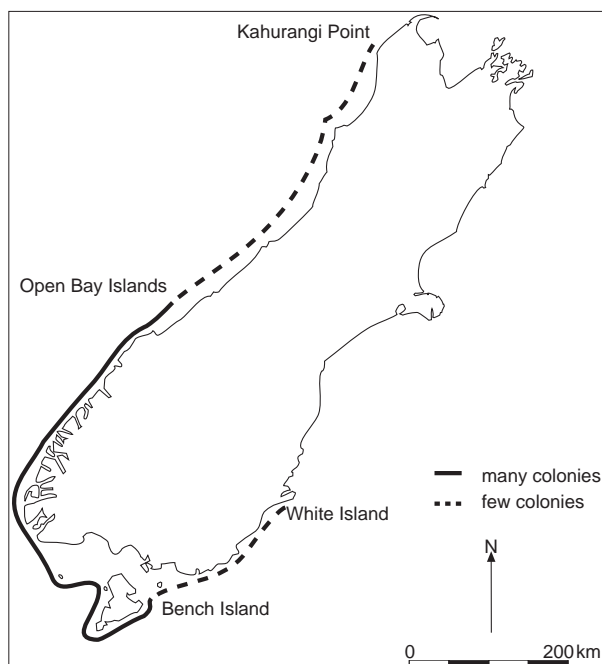


Figure 12. Postulated distribution of fur seal colonies at the beginning of the sealing industry (after Smith 1985, 1989).

voyages for which data on location can be inferred, Fiordland was visited during 42%, Foveaux Strait 33%, Stewart Island 31%, and Westland 19%. Not surprisingly, this closely matches the late 18th/early 19th century distribution of fur seal colonies (Fig. 12). At least some of the recorded visits to Otago, and all of those to Canterbury, Cook Strait, and the North Island are most likely to represent port visits or unsuccessful searches for seals rather than actual sealing activity.

TABLE 4. SEALING VOYAGE VISITS TO NEW ZEALAND REGIONS UP TO 1890.

REGION	SEALING	pre-1803	1803-07	1808-12	1813-22	1823-29	1830-39	1840-71	1872-90	TOTAL
Fiordland	Definite	2	5	1	5	5	3	-	-	21
	Possible	3	3	2	-	-	11	1	1	21
Foveaux Strait	Definite	-	2	12	3	4	-	-	-	21
	Possible	-	1	-	1	5	5	-	-	12
Stewart Island	Definite	-	1	7	4	7	-	-	-	19
	Possible	-	2	1	-	8	1	-	-	12
Westland	Definite	-	-	3	3	2	2	1	-	11
	Possible	-	-	1	4	3	-	-	-	8
Otago	Definite	-	-	2	-	-	-	-	-	2
	Possible	-	-	1	-	3	-	-	-	4
	Unlikely	-	-	-	2	1	-	-	-	3
Canterbury	Unlikely	-	-	2	1	1	-	-	-	4
Cook Str.	Unlikely	-	-	2	-	5	1	-	-	8
North I.	Unlikely	-	-	2	-	1	-	-	-	3
No data		-	1	4	6	38	6	-	-	55

The following discussion considers more detailed locational evidence for each region, drawing upon both the voyaging accounts and other forms of historical evidence. The principal focus of this discussion is to determine those locations most likely to have seen land-based sealing activities. For these locations the available archaeological evidence is reviewed in an attempt to determine specific historic places from the sealing industry. In addition, a small number of places are proposed on archaeological grounds alone. The specific localities identified here are summarised in Appendix 3.

6.1 WESTLAND

Many sealing vessels operating out of Sydney made their initial landfall on the Westland coast. However there are only 19 voyages for which there is definite or possible evidence of actual sealing there, and 10 of these provide evidence of location (Fig. 13).

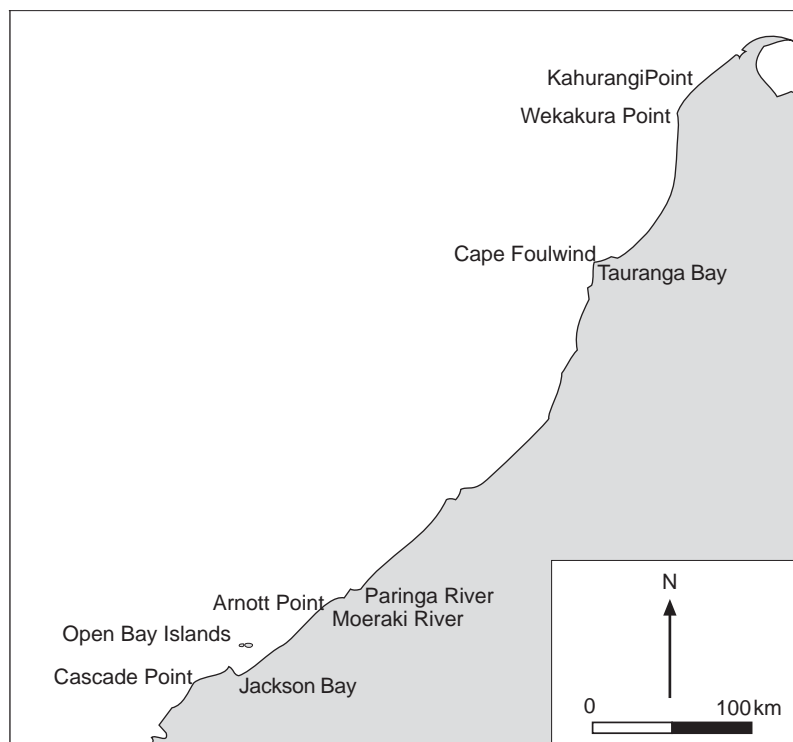


Figure 13. West coast of the South Island, showing major localities discussed in the text (section 6.1).

6.1.1 Kahurangi–Wekakura

History

Two voyages can be associated with the rocky coast between Kahurangi and Wekakura Points. In 1832 a gang from *Admiral Gifford* was massacred at Rocks Point, just north of Wekakura (Molloy 1987: 14), and in 1836 *Harriet* anchored at Awaruata (Big River) just north of Kahurangi Point (Heaphy 1959: 210) and landed a gang from the Te Awaiti whaling station. They appear to have operated at Toropuhi, close to Wekakura Point. The Te Awaiti whalers are reported to have made more or less annual expeditions to the northern part of the west coast between 1836 and 1845 (Richards n.d.), but Heaphy (1959: 214–215)

noted in 1846 that Toropuhi had not been visited for 'nine or ten years', which may suggest that only their earliest expeditions called there. Heaphy also reported that a sealing boat had been stove-in there 'about 15 years ago', indicating that sealing had begun there by 1831.

Archaeology

The Kahurangi-Wekakura area has not been systematically surveyed, and the only known sites appear to be pre-European ovens and pits. The probable presence of at least two shore-based gangs in this area suggest the potential for further surviving archaeological evidence.

6.1.2 Cape Foulwind

History

The Steeples, just off Cape Foulwind, were known to the sealers as 'Black Reef' (Heaphy 1959: 220) or 'Black Rocks' (Hocken n.d.), and seals could also be taken at Tauranga Bay on the mainland shore. There are only two voyaging references to sealing there, by *Sally* in 1826 (Hocken n.d.), and *Three Brothers* in 1844 (Allan 1965: 16). Both instances appear to have been ship-based sealing. Allan (1965: 13-16) also suggests that other sealing parties operated there in the 1820s, and that a gang from the Te Awaiti whaling station lived there for several months. As noted above, this is likely to have been between 1836 and 1845. Brunner (1959: 280, 287-288) noted that a 'sealing party and boat' had been there, and perhaps further south in the summer of 1846-47.

Archaeology

Numerous archaeological sites have been recorded around Cape Foulwind and Tauranga Bay. The only one suggestive of a possible association with the sealing industry is a large site (K29/1)³ at the northern end of Tauranga Bay. This appears to derive predominantly from prehistoric occupation, but lead grapeshot, porcelain fragments and a glass jar have been recovered from the upper part of the deposit. However its association with the activities of sealers is entirely conjectural.

6.1.3 'Open Bay'

History

Sealers used this title for that part of the Westland coast between Arnott Point and Cascade Point (Starke 1986: 38, 40). Five voyages are known to have operated in this vicinity. John Grono was probably there in *Governor Bligh* during 1809-10 (Kerr n.d.: 21), and a shore-based gang was set down on the Open Bay Islands by *Active* in January 1810 (McNab 1907: 153-155, Kerr n.d.: 36-38). They were not relieved until November 1813, indicating that few, if any, other vessels had been in the vicinity in the interim. Another gang is said to have been landed 'in Open Bay' by *King George* in 1818 (Richards 1995: 101). A boat crew from *Hope* was lost 'off Open Bay' in 1820-21, perhaps while ship-based sealing. *Elizabeth* had a boat-based gang there in 1825, using a hut on Open Bay Islands and sealing at Arnott River on the mainland coast. The

³ Site number in the New Zealand Archaeological Association Site Recording Scheme.

following year Boulton's boat-based gang, from the same vessel, used a hut on Open Bay Islands, another about a quarter of a mile up 'Arnott River', stayed in a cave at Arnott Point and camped at Jackson's Bay. Beattie (1919: 220) records the presence of another sealing gang at Paringa, although at what date and from which vessel is not clear.

Archaeology

Open Bay Islands—Two sites have been recorded on Open Bay Islands, and a third record is added here. A probable hut location near the eastern end of Taumaka, the larger of the two islands, was suggested by Burrows (1972: 30) on the basis of three test pits showing buried charcoal, in one case associated with a broken glass jar. This was reiterated by Begg & Begg (1979: 142) but no site record has been entered until now (F37/**)⁴. At the western end of Taumaka a rectangular stone structure, F37/18, (Fig. 14) has been interpreted as the remains of a sealers' hut or storehouse (Cassady St. Clair & St. Clair 1990). Timber remnants of another possible hut (F37/20) have been recorded on the smaller Popotai Island.



Figure 14. Wall of stone hut on Taumaka, Open Bay Islands, thought to have been built by sealers. Photo: Cassady St Clair and St Clair. (Deposited with NZAA Site Record Form F37/18, and reproduced here courtesy of NZAA Site Recording Scheme.)

Arnott Point—Begg & Begg (1979: 150–151) located a cave at Arnott Point which they suggested was that used by Boulton. They did not report any archaeological remains but it has been recorded here as a site (F36/**), pending further field assessment.

'Arnott River'—Begg & Begg (1979: 145) suggest that this was the Moeraki River, while Starke (1986: 41) proposed the Paringa. By my reading, Boulton's account does not make it possible to be sure which river he used. Neither appears to have been surveyed for archaeological sites.

⁴ Sites with sheet numbers followed by /** indicate newly submitted records that have not yet been allocated numbers.

6.1.4 Cascade

History

There are no voyaging references to the southernmost part of the Westland coast, but Boulton went ashore to seal or camp at 'Cascade Beach' (Starke 1986: 38), and in 1946 Kekeno took seals 'at Cascade' (Wilson 1974: 178), probably during ship-based sealing operations.

Archaeology

Cascade Beach might refer to a number of places in the vicinity of Cascade Point. A cluster of sites have been recorded here, but all appear to be Maori ovens and middens, with nothing to suggest that any should be classified as sealing sites.

6.2 FIORDLAND

Two places stand out in the historical references to Fiordland. Both Dusky Sound and Preservation Inlet are referred to or suggested in relation to 15 sealing voyages. Chalky Inlet receives seven mentions, Thompson and/or Doubtful Sound three, Milford Sound two, while Dagg, Breaksea, and George Sounds get one each. These are considered here along with several other localities not referred to in the voyaging accounts (Fig. 15).

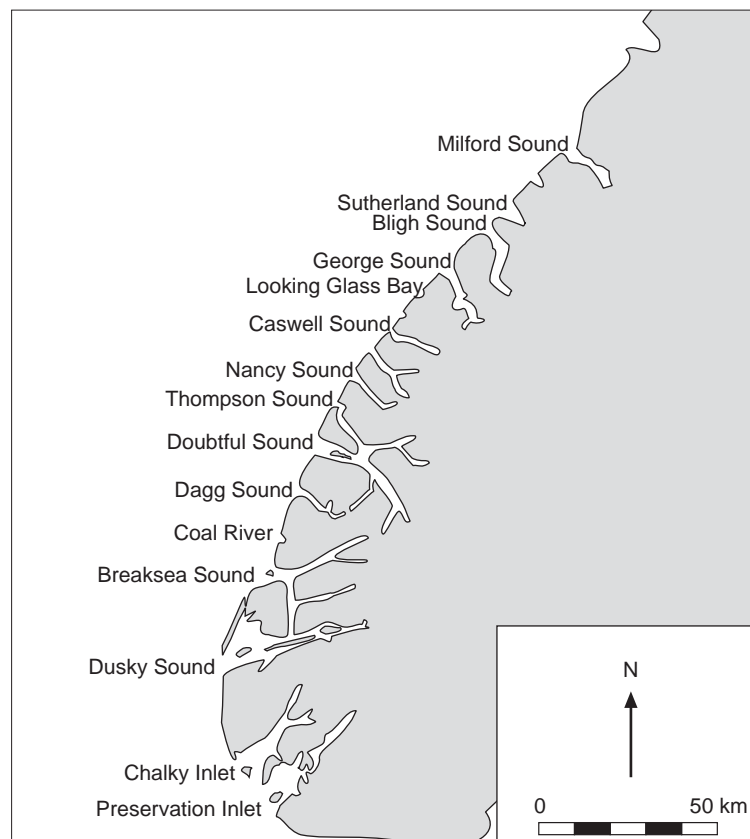


Figure 15. Fiordland, showing major coastal features mentioned in the text.

6.2.1 Milford Sound

History

Boulton's boat-based gang stayed twice 'at Milford Haven... [in] a hut, made by sealers' (Starke 1986: 36-37). The sound is said to have been named by Grono (Hall-Jones 1976: 16) and was described by de Blosseville in 1824 as 'recently discovered' (McNab 1907: 223) suggesting that this base was established during one of Grono's voyages in 1822-23. Begg & Begg (1979: 157-158) placed the location of the hut in the southwest corner of Anita Bay.

Subsequent use of this bay is indicated by Beattie's (1919: 219) account of an attack by sealers on a group of Maori there, apparently in retribution for the 1826 attack on Boulton's gang at Arnott Point (Begg & Begg 1979: 159). Milford Sound also appears to have been used in later periods, as a ship called there in 1873 'to look for some sealing boats which had been out for ten months' (Cumpston 1968: 80).

Archaeology

Surveys of Milford Sound have identified five sites (McGovern-Wilson 1985), all but one in the vicinity of Anita Bay. D40/1 appears to be the locality identified as a hut site by the Begg's. This site is recorded as a bowenite working floor, and is reported to have been used as a garden by the Milford Hotel about the turn of the century and subsequently for a Park Board hut (Coultts 1971: fig. 3). For these reasons archaeological confirmation of its status as a sealing camp is likely to be difficult. Another hut site (D40/8) near the centre of the bay was built in the 1930s (McGovern-Wilson 1985: S112/3).

6.2.2 Sutherland Sound

History

There are no historical references to sealing in this locality, but it is included here on archaeological grounds.

Archaeology

In 1952 Lockerbie (n.d.) excavated a cave (C40/1) in which the floor had been divided into room-like compartments by boulder walls. Midden refuse and adze-cut wood suggest Maori occupation, but Lockerbie concluded that the possibility 'that the shelter structure was the work of sealers could not be ruled out'. This association is clearly no more than conjectural.

6.2.3 Bligh Sound

History

There are no voyaging references to sealing in this locality. It is thought to have been named by Grono (Hall-Jones 1976: 16), but this may indicate no more than that he was pursuing ship-based sealing in the vicinity.

Archaeology

This sound has been surveyed (McGovern-Wilson 1985: 4), but none of the six recorded sites are suggestive of land-based sealing activity.

6.2.4 George Sound

History

The only direct voyaging reference to George Sound is from 1826 when two boat-based gangs, one including John Boulton, were deposited there by *Elizabeth* (Starke 1986: 36). However Boulton's description makes it clear that several huts were already established there (Starke 1986: 49), indicating previous use by shore-based or boat-based gangs. Begg & Begg (1979: 160) suggest that this base was on the north side of the stream draining Lake Katherine at the head of the Sound.

Archaeology

George Sound has been thoroughly surveyed (McGovern-Wilson 1985: 4) and only one site previously recorded. Added as part of this project is a record for the huts reported by Boulton (C41/13). Surface assessment of this site is required.

6.2.5 Looking Glass Bay

History

There are no voyaging references to sealing here, but Boulton's boat-based gang went ashore here briefly to seal or camp (Starke 1986: 50).

Archaeology

There have been no surveys in this bay (McGovern-Wilson 1985: 4), and it seems unlikely that recognisable evidence of the brief activity recorded there could be found.

6.2.6 Caswell Sound

History

There are no voyaging references to sealing here, but the Sound is thought to have been named by Grono (Begg & Begg 1979: 128) or his son-in-law Alexander Brooks (Hall-Jones 1976: 17). Boulton's boat-based gang either camped or took seals on Styles Island at the entrance to the Sound (Starke 1986: 50).

Archaeology

Partial survey (McGovern-Wilson 1985: 4) has identified four sites. A copper stud reported amongst midden at one of these (C41/7) raises the possibility that it might be a sealers' camp.

6.2.7 Nancy Sound

History

There are no historical references to sealing here, but the Sound is thought to have been named by John Grono (Hall-Jones 1976: 16).

Archaeology

There have been no archaeological surveys (McGovern-Wilson 1985: 4).